

Is That Flower TALKING to You?

Did you know that flowers communicate?

Many flowers use colors, scents and even shapes to communicate with animals around them. What are they trying to tell the animal world?



Flowers are the part of a plant that can **produce seeds**. When a flower first starts growing, it is packed up tightly in a flower bud. At the

right time of year the bud opens up and the flower spreads out. Inside the flower are the parts that can make new seeds. The female part, the pistil, is in the middle. Arranged around the middle are the male parts, the stamens. The stamens make a powder called "pollen" which needs to move to the pistil of a different flower so that it can join with tiny eggs inside the pistil to make seeds.



This is where many flowers get animals to help them out.

First they make a lure, something that animals will really like. For many flowers this lure is nectar, a sweet liquid that they produce just for animals. Then they put out some advertising – colorful petals, peculiar smells or even special shapes to attract animals. When the animal comes to get the lure, the flower's pollen sticks to its body and gets a lift to the pistil of another flower!



Hummingbirds like to visit long red flowers, but because hummingbirds can't smell, these flowers usually don't have a scent. Honeybees really like sweet smelling white, blue and yellow flowers, while flies visit flowers that smell bad to us but delicious to them.



San Francisco Botanical Garden

in Golden Gate Park is 55 acres of plants from around the world. Free to visitors and open every day of the year, the garden relies on hundreds of volunteers. See our website for information about working with children in the garden, being a bookstore or nursery volunteer or helping out in other ways.

Newspaper activity:

You could say that plants advertise to animals, to let them know that nectar is available. Take a look at today's newspaper. Cut out three advertisements you like and three that you don't like. Did you pick them because of the way they look, what they say, or the things that they are trying to sell?